



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

6th District News

Spring 2007

Representative Don Barlow

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Dear Friends:

It is truly an honor to represent our 6th Legislative District – Washington's finest neighborhoods and communities.

Phew, what a relief to get out of Olympia! Sure, the state capital is a nice place to visit. But it is so great to get back to folks who make their homes in our district – northern and southern Spokane, and the western part of Spokane County. **Since it was my first session, you won't be surprised to hear me call the 105-day meeting a whirlwind! "Fast-paced" is the only way I can describe it.**

I'm pleased to send you this report on our activities this year. In addition to reviewing legislative proposals in which I was most closely involved, my newsletter includes sections on the new state budgets. **(Let me note right here that the new transportation budget continues the highly important work on Spokane's own north-south freeway!)**

Thank you again for the wonderful honor of serving you and other citizens and families.

Best wishes,

Don Barlow
State Representative
6th Legislative District

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◆ Budget:

Two-year plan highlights society's principal assignment

I have heard it said that three key factors in real estate are "location, location and location."

No doubt, that's an exaggeration. And it is also a stretch to say that the three main ingredients in an operating budget are "education, education and education." But yes – whether it's public school, or private school, or home-schooling – there is very little a family or a society does today as important as getting children ready to lead it tomorrow.

Our schools at all grade and learning levels – preschool on through K-12, college and university – top the new budget.

Additional money to emphasize the importance of early learning is included in the budget, as well as school-safety. I'm talking about more emphasis on quality child care and in-home visits for at-risk families of young children.

It is important to start school off on the right foot, and there is no other way to do so than to do a better job preparing preschoolers.

We will also phase in full-day kindergarten, provide stronger math and science instruction, bolster special education, emphasize dropout-prevention, strengthen teacher-salaries, and reduce class sizes. Finally, higher education is underscored in bigger enrollments and better financial assistance.

Another big part of the budget is health care, where costs have soared so high that state and local governments, businesses and, most importantly, consumers can't afford to keep up.

More than 72,000 children in our state don't have coverage, and more than 520,000 adults aren't covered.

Many adults without insurance work full time, and a lot of them are small-business owners.

The truth is that people without health insurance often rely on emergency care – and that's the most expensive option.

Besides being an awful situation for them, it drives up costs for everyone else.

This problem didn't appear overnight, and we can't make it go away in a day. But we can get started reversing it, and that's what we did this year. The budget includes coverage for thousands more adults and kids, very much including foster kids.

Also in the new operating budget, I was pleased to obtain funding for implementation of a Wild Horse Coordinated Resource Management Plan in central Washington. This strategy will improve natural springs in the region, develop water resources, and maintain livestock-grazing opportunities.

◆ Senior citizens:

Session's very first successful measure assists with prescriptions

A bipartisan measure I prime-sponsored will prevent our most vulnerable citizens from falling through cracks in federal Medicare Part D prescription coverage. I was gratified that this bill was the first one signed into law by the governor.

The idea is to make sure low-income senior citizens and disabled citizens can obtain needed prescriptions. Terms of the legislation take care of the co-payment required of citizens who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid coverage.

When the new federal Medicare Part D policy took effect a year ago, low-income senior citizens and disabled citizens were required to make a co-payment for each prescription.

My bill will prevent this hardship for 100,000 folks in our state who

currently qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid – and other people who will one day qualify.

Twenty or 30 or 40 bucks a month means a lot to someone who must buy groceries, pay rent and take care of their power bill on an average income of \$600 a month.



I was honored to sponsor and lead floor support for a resolution honoring the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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◆ Military: Measure establishes veterans' cemetery in eastern Washington

Honorably discharged deceased veterans, as well as their deceased spouses, may be laid to rest in a new Eastern Washington State Veterans' Cemetery. That's the fair, reasonable goal in another bill I sponsored and was happy to see signed into law.

In their military service to our country, these citizens gave our nation one of the ultimate sacrifices a person can make. I believe their families also deserve our commitment to remembering them when their loved ones are no longer with us.

The hundreds of veterans on our side of the mountains have every right to be buried at Tahoma National Cemetery in western Washington. All I'm saying is that a cemetery in eastern Washington will be far more convenient for departed veterans' families who live on our side of the state. **We can surely show this honor to our genuine patriots.**



◆ Top teachers: This new century demands quality pay for quality instructors

We must send a good level of financial encouragement to the best and brightest teachers. This is the goal in a third successful measure I sponsored that is now state law.

The bill will provide bonuses for teachers who have earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Our top teachers should be paid on a level with their role in making our classrooms world-class.



The board sets rigorous standards for teachers, who must go through an intense assessment. We need these highly skilled folks in our classrooms if we expect our students to compete with

young people from other states and countries.

This certification attests that teachers are superbly qualified to get the very most out of their pupils in terms of meeting high academic expectations. **This is exactly the kind of teacher we need in the 21st century.**

◆ Health sciences: New policy will help battle disease, and spur the economy

Another new policy is aimed at hastening development of a proposed Institute for Systems Medicine in Spokane. Terms of my bill direct that a Health Sciences and Services Authority could be formed in Spokane to pursue bioscience-based economic development.

The proposed new institute in the authority could lead to discovery and perfection of new therapies and procedures to battle diseases that stymie us today. We simply must embrace 21st-century strategies to tap new therapies in our mission to combat disease.



Furthermore, this is a program we'd better champion if we expect to win what I call the "Brains Race" for economic development. We must advance the role of partnerships involving the private and public sectors.

The health-care industry accounts for 20 percent of the gross national product of our United States. **These are important life-saving and quality-of-life-enhancing jobs.** We're talking about careers that would grow from entities such as the institute proposed in Spokane.

◆ Construction: Capital budget includes funds for projects in our Spokane region

A cemetery for deceased veterans whose families live in the Spokane region and a number of projects for our two community colleges are among major items funded in the new capital budget. (I talked about the new cemetery earlier today.) Also, the Mobius Science Center, which I

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supported, will receive funding in this new budget.

Two key themes are solid infrastructure and sound accountability. These projects will create thousands of family-wage jobs. As for accountability, from now on, decisions involving public facilities will include review from business-stakeholders to make sure we get a better bang for the public's buck.

Spokane-area projects include work at the North Spokane YMCA, the Community Wellness Center, the Salvation Army Family Services Resource Center, the East Central Community Center, the Emmanuel Center, the Northeast Community Center, Avista Stadium, Whitewater Park, and Eastern Washington State Historical Society projects.

I'm disappointed that the capital budget doesn't include money to help pay for an Armed Forces & Aerospace Museum near Spokane International Airport. We'll keep working to get funding help for this project.

◆ Counselors: Tough-but-fair new state standards must wait till next year

No, it wasn't a perfect legislative session – and I'll be the first to admit it. My legislation separating the field of counseling into two therapeutic-counseling professions – agency-affiliated counselors and mental-health advisers – didn't make it out of the Senate this year.

We passed it in the House. But then it got tangled up in a few of the knottier details in the Senate. The tough-but-fair new standards in this legislation are essential for the health and peace of mind of our citizens.

Washington is one of only two states that registers counselors without requiring appropriate education, training and supervision. All it takes here is 40 dollars and a four-hour AIDS class – and you can hang out your shingle.

I want to encourage folks who are doing counseling to move toward a more professional footing.

Protecting our children

Another bill I'll keep working on would exempt a sex offense against a child under the age of 18 years old from the statute of limitations. The sex offense could be prosecuted any time after the crime – even if it's 10 or 50 or 100 years later. **In view of the lifetime "sentence" that victims must "serve," these sick and twisted perpetrators should be subject to prosecution forever.**

We'll keep championing these legislative proposals next session, I assure you.

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